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Saudi Jewels: 'Sensationalized'

By Carroll Kilpatrick

White House spokesman Gerald L. Warren said yesterday a Washington Post story on a gift of jewelry from the Saudi Arabian royal family to Mrs. Nixon was "blown completely out of proportions and sensationalized."

Warren said the story by Maxine Cheshire took "a natural situation and manufactured that situation in a sensational way that shows to me the lengths to which some people will go to, by inference, cast the First Family in a bad light."

The Nixon administration has recorded all gifts precisely and in great detail, Warren said when questioned about the story reporting that the Saudi Arabian royal family had given jewelry, including a set valued at more than \$52,400, to the Nixons in the last five years.

Warren said that the gifts are the property of the American people and maintained that all gifts are registered as received.

The White House did not remove its ban on access to the files on gifts for screening by reporters to determine what jewels, paintings or other objects of substantial value have been given in addition to the Saudi Arabian royal gifts.

While the White House states emphatically it considers such gifts in the category of "public property" and that they will go to a "public repository" after Mr. Nixon leaves office, it maintains that the records of gifts are Mr. Nixon's private files and that disclosure

could embarrass some donors, particularly foreigners, and possibly create international difficulties.

Early in 1969, the First Family made a decision to make a record of all gifts received and to preserve them for the nation, Warren said.

He specifically objected to a part of the story which said that some of the jewelry, which had been used by Mrs. Nixon and her daughter Tricia Cox, was not recorded at the time received. He said it was.

Warren said that when "a member of this honored profession goes to such lengths to demean the First Family" after being given the facts in detail he found it "totally inexcusable."

In fact, The Post story said that although Gifts Unit records indicate the receipt of a gift of jewelry among other items given by Saudi Arabian Prince Sultan on July 1, 1972, the jewelry was not actually received or processed by the unit with a description of the pieces or their value until March 28, 1974, the day after a reporter asked to see records on specific Saudi jewels.

Warren also denied that White House counsel J. Fred Buzhardt recommended that Mrs. Nixon transfer the gifts from a White House safe to the gifts office in the Executive Office Building.

Asked why these particular gifts were appraised by experts and others were not, Warren said he did not know.

"It is not the practice to appraise every gift," he said.